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Chris Porter

Research Context and Methodological Notes

- 1 This paper draws on information gathered as part of an ongoing research project which focuses on football culture in Manchester, and specifically aims to record the implications of recent transformations that have impacted on the supporters of the city's football clubs.
- 2 Empirical data from individual and focus group interviews has complemented more longitudinal ethnographic research undertaken within the football culture of Manchester. It has been possible therefore to develop a perhaps privileged, and certainly "engaged", perspective from which to consider the structurally unsettled yet fiercely defended "habitus" of Manchester's football culture.
- 3 As researcher, the implications of such participant observation methods are acknowledged, and indeed the "immersed" nature of the project has been the subject of significant reflection throughout. While the scope and range of this paper restricts the extent to which such issues can be analysed here, it would be remiss not to offer a brief methodological justification. The research project is fundamentally centred on cultural issues, of meanings, values, actions and discourse, albeit within an environment influenced by more structural factors which are more objectively measurable from a detached perspective.
- 4 A key objective of the research therefore has been to provide a hermeneutic account of cultural responses to wider transformations. Following the likes of Gadamer and even Rorty, Foucault and Bauman, it is felt that in order to document in a meaningful way the implications for those living within the local culture, it is necessary to experience them from a grounded perspective (Blackshaw, 2005). So while a transition from participant to

researcher and vice versa certainly brings problems which require explicit reflection, the cultural insights and naturally embedded standpoint this position allows must be viewed as a strong justifying argument when critiquing the methods employed.

Background

- 5 In May 2005 the American businessman Malcolm Glazer became the majority shareholder in Manchester United Plc, very much against the will of many of the club's supporters and shareholders. Within two months he had successfully purchased over 98% of the company's shares, and as the club's new owner he promptly removed it from the stock market, forcing a compulsory buyout of any remaining "dissenting" shareholders.
- 6 Manchester United had been floated on the stock exchange in 1991, having existed as a privately-owned football club since its formation in 1878. Many questions had been raised throughout its 14 years as a publicly listed company, particularly concerning what many saw as an inherent conflict of interest between those of a football club as community stakeholder, and those of a publicly accountable company with an obligation to produce profitable dividends for its financial stakeholders (Conn, 1997; Brown and Walsh, 1999).
- 7 The primary *community* stakeholders – the club's supporters – had never had anything more than an emotional stake in the club until the opportunity arose in 1991 to purchase a tangible say in the running of the club. Securing anything more than a token shareholding however, proved beyond the financial reach of the majority of supporters, who on the whole saw nothing more from their shareholdings than a souvenir certificate and an opportunity to attend company AGMs.
- 8 In October 1998, media baron Rupert Murdoch's satellite broadcasting company BSkyB had launched a takeover bid for the club which was eventually blocked by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, following pressure from a well organised independent supporters' campaign who lobbied MPs into challenging the move on grounds of unfair competition (see Brown and Walsh, 1999).
- 9 Manchester United's more politically engaged supporters, mainly via the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association (IMUSA)¹ and independently-produced fanzines Red Issue and United We Stand, remained vehemently opposed to any takeover of the club. While they had consistently viewed its PLC status as a far from perfect situation, they feared the dubious motives of anyone seeking to take the club into private hands and away from public accountability.
- 10 Following the scare of Murdoch's takeover bid, fans were urged to buy shares in the club and entrust them to Shareholders United² – an organisation set up by fans with the aim of pooling together supporter-owned shares to provide them with the power necessary to block any future takeover attempts, and with an ultimate ambition to be in a position to give the fans a controlling stake themselves, thus turning Manchester United into a supporter-owned, democratically run football club.
- 11 The high market value of the company however, meant that despite growing numbers of supporters buying up small amounts of shares (in excess of 32,000 individual shareholding members by the time Glazer made his takeover bid) the fans were not in a strong enough position to prevent it. A number of high-profile demonstrations took place from October 2004 when it became clear that a bid was highly likely, which although

keeping the issue in the media spotlight and drawing widespread support from the club's fan base and beyond, failed to deter Glazer from pressing ahead with his purchase.

- 12 Protest marches outside Old Trafford on match days presented banners and chants proclaiming that the fans wouldn't allow the club to be sold. "United United, Not For Sale" was the most common vocal refrain, along with banners and leaflets carrying the message "No Customers, No Profits", urging fans to boycott club merchandise. A burning effigy of Malcolm Glazer outside Old Trafford left observers in no doubt as to the welcome this potential new owner could expect. Away from the stadium, protesting fans "flashmobbed" the city centre stores of sponsors Nike, Vodafone and Ladbroke's, gatecrashed a UEFA executive meeting at Manchester City's new ground to question that organisation's stewardship, and Manchester remains adorned with stickers bearing a slogan which is now a ubiquitous part of fan discourse: "Love United: Hate Glazer".
- 13 Although it seemed the majority of Manchester United supporters had been in opposition, once the takeover happened many failed to see the purpose in continuing protests against the club's new owners, and the widely-held view amongst fans was that they must get on with their traditionally-defined role in support of the football club under whatever ownership status it happened to be in. Private ownership was, after all, the state the club had been in for the vast majority of its history, and certainly from the 1960s onwards the club's owners had regularly courted controversy and been far from popular amongst United's support (see Crick, 1989; Conn, 1997).
- 14 Likewise, football supporters in Britain had never had any democratic representation in key decision making processes, so had arguably developed a fatalistic culture of dependency towards their teams, which in turn further empowered the clubs to exploit the "captive audiences" they enjoyed (Conn, 1997). The experiences of recent years however had resulted in the development of a more politicised and often militant element among Manchester United's support, and many of these fans had no intention of continuing in this subservient role under what they saw as Glazer's occupation of "their" football club.

English football and global capitalism

- 15 As part of an industry, and indeed a nation, whose structures and interests are explicitly reliant on (and indeed are themselves a driver of) the ebbs and flows of global capital – or "the way of the world" as many consider it with shrugged shoulders – Manchester United Football Club became viewed as a commodity, and had now been traded as such. That this commodity had at least in part been built upon relatively "fuzzy" notions of *community* or *culture*, that are potentially in direct opposition to the more "steely" ideologies of global capitalism, appears to be no hurdle to those who view Manchester United as a phenomenon from which to make, or more accurately increase, their fortune.
- 16 Within this global, corporate and commodified environment, notions of local identity, cultural capital and authenticity have become increasingly scrutinised within Manchester United supporters' discourse, and perhaps not surprisingly at a time when these values are seen as being most under threat. Such questioning of supporters' identity and credibility is not something only to have occurred in the wake of the Glazer saga. English football's heightened popularity and new-found credibility within a wider spectrum of social circles throughout the 1990s disrupted many traditionally held notions regarding

English football culture, and undoubtedly laid the foundations from which the game would grow into an industry worthy of the attention of prospective investors such as Malcolm Glazer. Indeed, it was this burgeoning value of the English football product that had convinced Rupert Murdoch to launch his ultimately doomed bid for Manchester United in 1998. An awareness of this chapter in the club's recent history is crucial in understanding the supporter culture which existed then and now amongst Manchester United fans, so reactions to the 2005 Glazer takeover can be better understood.

Local identity

- 17 Football clubs are traditionally both physically and symbolically linked to a particular place, as evidenced by the club names which with very few exceptions bear the name of the town or city, or part of a city, in which the club is based. Although there are studies which show that clubs have long garnered support from outside their immediate locale, often from as far back as the early decades of the twentieth century (Mellor, 1999), there is little doubt that the contemporary setting of football, certainly in the United Kingdom, and especially so at the top level of the English game, has been the subject of a great deal of debate concerning the role of football clubs as symbols or representatives of traditional local identifications. This has been particularly exacerbated in the light of many clubs' increasingly global aspirations (Brown, 1998; King, 1998; Giulianotti, 2002; Crabbe and Brown, 2003), which have pushed English football to the forefront of the game's increasing commodification since the early 1990s (Conn, 1997). During this time, football has emerged as the most globalised of all sports, particularly through its relationship with global media and communications technologies.
- 18 These globalising tendencies have created new audiences locally, nationally and globally. This has also led to some dislocation of "traditional" (i.e., longstanding and/or local) fans' sense of selves in relation the club (Brown, 1998; King, 1998; Brown and Walsh, 1999), a pattern identified in Giulianotti's (2002) taxonomy of fan identities or supporter "types". Within these new and traditional forms of consumption, notions of locality and the city, and popular culture's place within them, are played out. Often, within this heavily mediated and commodified cultural form, notions of authenticity – which in the case of Manchester rely heavily on a sense of belonging to the city – are raised, and potentially question many widely-held notions of globalisation's characteristics and consequences.

Manchester's football context

- 19 A particularly clear manifestation of such concerns is evident in the complex and often inconsistent relationships between the public images and corporate policies of Manchester's two main football clubs. United are recognised as a leader in this field and the club is openly branded as a "global" product. Manchester City have also begun moves towards a more commodified and global operation – partly evidenced by the move from their traditional Maine Road "home" to a newly built, more financially beneficial complex, as well as the club's 2007 takeover by Thailand's former PM Thaksin Shinawatra. At the same time, City continue to explicitly brand themselves as Manchester's traditional, "local" club.

- 20 It is worth emphasising again that Manchester United supporters had perceived their local identity and traditional fan culture to be under threat long before the Glazer takeover. As the transformations mentioned above took hold of English football throughout the 1990s, the particularly extreme form of commercialisation undertaken by Manchester United led to a great deal of criticism of the club from its own supporters. Whereas they were enjoying the most successful period in the club's history, an imaginary schism had developed in the minds of many United supporters between the team and those who controlled the club – hence the well-used phrase within independent fan culture of “*love the team – hate the club*” (King 1998; Brown 2004). As the best supported, most well-known, and during this time the most successful club in playing and commercial terms, Manchester United found themselves at the centre of most debates regarding the state of football in England.
- 21 As supporters of this equally loved and hated club, the club's fans became the targets for a great deal of derision from rival fans, as well as from sections of the media. Much of this ridicule, and often contempt, was centred on a feeling that Manchester United fans lacked authenticity – their credibility as loyal football supporters was being called into question, with a particular focus being placed on notions of locality. Manchester United fans from outside of Manchester were widely mocked, and the commonly-held stereotype of Manchester United fans being from anywhere other than Manchester became well known and happily accepted within football culture and beyond.
- 22 In the immediate footballing culture of Manchester, the focus on locality was at its most intense, with supporters of rivals Manchester City regularly staking a claim for “ownership” or “belonging” to the city. Chants of “*do you come from Manchester?*” were regularly heard from City fans at derby matches between the two clubs (this chant also became a staple of most other rival fans in matches against Manchester United). Mocking references were also made to United's vast overseas support, as in the example of the City fans' taunt “*you're the pride of Singapore*”, and this became a regular theme within supporter discourse, from the songs sung in the stadium, banter in the pubs and in articles and letters of fanzines, as well as in more mainstream media (Crabbe and Brown, 2003; Brown, 2004).
- 23 Manchester City's official marketing initiatives have recently highlighted the club's claimed credentials as *the* authentic Manchester club, a trend highlighted by a 2006 campaign consisting of billboards placed around Manchester bearing slogans such as “This Is Our City” and “Real Manchester” set against City's club colours (Burrell, 2005). In response to such “attacks” on their credibility as both authentic football supporters and as Mancunians, Manchester United supporters have been observed as displaying a re-assertion of their local identity (King, 1998; Crabbe and Brown, 2003), partly through a re-intensification of their rivalry with City, a reaction described by Brown as being variously linked to Appadurai's (1996) concept of “creating cultural difference to the “other” as well as to Robertson's (1992) work on “glocalisation” (Brown, 2004, p. 8).

Globalisation, commodification and the disputed ownership of culture

- 24 The globalisation of English football, and Manchester United in particular, has clearly had significant impacts not only upon the marketing direction taken by the commodified

“product”, but also upon those “consumers” operating within the complex dynamics of supporter culture, much of which is based on notions of local identity. Ironically, the club who are seen as being at the forefront of the game’s globalisation, and whose supporters are routinely derided as exemplifying the non-local, inauthentic face of global football culture, is the club where there appears to be most vehement opposition to such transformations.

- 25 The fierce campaign of resistance by Manchester United supporters against the club’s 2005 takeover, and the resonance felt culturally, can not be so simplistic bracketed as a struggle *merely* between “the local” and “the global”. This case nevertheless represents an intriguing example of the difficulties faced when a local form of popular culture becomes of global commercial interest, and how local identity can become at once threatened and yet invigorated by exposure to global forces.
- 26 The opposition to the takeover amongst Manchester United fans, and more specifically the unprecedented soul-searching that many experienced in the wake of the takeover, has resulted in new dynamics within the club’s supporter culture. Such collective and individual reflection, as described in Giddens’ (1994) view of how globalisation can foster a heightened awareness of some of the formerly subconscious aspects of identity formation, has led therefore to the questioning of some fundamental elements of the supporters’ values and outlooks.
- 27 Emotional debates took place in person, in print and on line which forced fans to ask themselves just what it is that they are attaching themselves to when they express their allegiance to their club. Supporters therefore scrutinised in great detail the attachments they felt towards and the relative value they placed on all aspects of “the club”, including owners, players, managers, the stadium, club history, the city, fellow fans, songs, rituals, camaraderie, rivalries, shared experiences and family heritage. Fans were reflecting upon the kind of relationship that they wanted with their club, so that for many what previously had been largely unspoken issues of power between owners and fans, as producers and consumers, were now coming to the fore.
- 28 For many, the answers to such questions meant they could no longer continue to support the club in the way they had previously. Some gave up going to matches altogether while others decided to keep attending but would avoid funding the Glazer regime where possible by restricting spending to match tickets only, or perhaps by attending away matches only. For most, there wasn’t even a decision to be made – untroubled by talk of takeovers and ownership, of debt and shareholders, existing and new supporters have continued to fill Old Trafford since the takeover.
- 29 For those that made the decision to stop attending matches, the initial plan to maintain visible and audible protests against the new owners was soon dashed not only by the apathy of their fellow supporters, but by unexpected levels of hostility from some fans towards continued protests. The boycotters instead had to devise less confrontational means to register their opposition – lest they spark ugly altercations between fans, and risk irreparable divisions within the club’s support.
- 30 An interesting and controversial new dynamic in the local football culture in Manchester came about as a result of such divisions, in the form of FC United of Manchester³ – a club set up by those most disenchanted and disenfranchised with the situation at Manchester United. Formed in the image of the club they wanted Manchester United to be, this new club is democratically run, with each member having an equal say in the direction the

club takes. Its constitution (voted on by its 4,000 founder members, as were the board members, club name and crest) laid out a vision for a football club with strong, organic community links which would never put commercial concerns ahead of those of its match-going supporters.

- 31 Starting life ten divisions below the English Premiership, FC United claimed to provide a regular, accessible football experience for those Manchester United fans who now refused, or couldn't afford, to attend games at Old Trafford, although many of those who attend FC United games do still actively support Manchester United. For those fans boycotting any active support of Manchester United, the *"love the team, hate the club"* rhetoric has morphed into more complex forms, so that for many, an outlook of *"love the history, hate the present"* may be more accurate. For them, it is the shared memories as well as ongoing bonds with what they see as an intangible "spirit" or "soul" of Manchester United, that has legitimated their decision to break a cultural habit of a lifetime.

Cultural assets and regulation

- 32 The level of feeling amongst Manchester United supporters regarding what they continue to see as a threat to their cultural identity, raises important questions in terms of how cultural institutions and practices might be protected, if at all. Although the legal and political system in which the UK football industry operates largely precludes interventions in what are seen as private trading matters, there are some areas in which government or governing body regulations prevent football, other sports and cultural "assets" from being totally at the mercy of the free market economy. Issues such as debt levels, financial solvency, public access and television deals are to some extent subject to regulation from various bodies, and indeed the attempt to purchase Manchester United by Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB in 1998 was ultimately blocked by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the grounds of unfair competition, although tellingly much of the concern focused on the television industry rather than the future of football (Brown and Walsh, 1999).
- 33 Attempts then are occasionally made to protect what are seen as national, cultural or sporting assets in certain cases, although in the case of Malcolm Glazer's takeover, no regulatory procedures or systems were in place to challenge what was, after all, a perfectly legal transaction, and any adverse effects felt by involved parties were not within the remit of concern for either the Football Association, Premier League, UEFA, FIFA or the UK Government. In fact, the only organisation that declared an interest in the proceedings with regard to potential intervention was the American National Football League who expressed concern that as the owners of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Glazer family were possibly jeopardising the financial stability of one of its member clubs by committing so much capital to a new business venture (Griffiths, 2005).
- 34 One area of regulation that existed in English football until relatively recently which would have prevented both Murdoch and Glazer from launching their takeover bids from the outset, and indeed would have prevented Manchester United from trading itself on the stock market in the first place, was the now defunct FA Rule 34. This rule essentially prevented football clubs from being used to make money for investors by limiting the payment of dividends, something which was foreseen as a potential threat to the game, and its role in the wider community, at the time it was introduced by the Football Association in the late 19th Century (Conn, 1997).

- 35 So for the best part of 100 years, football clubs were regulated to protect their community stakeholders against the perils of market forces, thus “ensuring that clubs remain sporting institutions” (Conn, 1997, p. 41). Tottenham Hotspur Football Club however, sidestepped Rule 34 in 1983 by restructuring themselves and making the football club a mere subsidiary of a larger holding company, which of course was not technically subject to the FA’s rules. The Football Association’s acquiescence in allowing such a fundamental rule to be disregarded by one of its member clubs allowed Manchester United to follow suit in 1991, when as a Plc it was able to pay huge dividends to its directors following flotation on the stock exchange.
- 36 This circumvention of Rule 34, and more pointedly the willingness of the game’s governing body to allow football clubs to be traded as commercial concerns at the expense of its more cultural and community-based stakeholders, created the environment in which Malcolm Glazer was later able to purchase Manchester United, and go on to saddle the club with close to half a billion pounds of debt, despite the overwhelming opposition of the club’s supporters, as well as the fleeting opposition of the club’s directors and employees. The very real fear of the supporters now therefore, is that the club, operating as it is with no public accountability and within what appear to be very transient and flexible industry regulations, will be run with only one ultimate objective – to make money for its owners. It is of little consolation that a successful team is likely to be a necessity for the club to be profitable, particularly as the revenue streams most readily available for exploitation are those supplied by the supporters themselves. For the Manchester United supporters, enjoying the match day experience and supporting their team had always been an end in itself, and without the regulation that protected this cultural domain for so long, they are now merely the means from which the club’s owners will seek profit.

Global exposure, local distinction: whose culture?

“The local...is an arena where various people’s habits of meaning intersect, and where the global, or what has been local somewhere else, also has some chance of making itself at home. At this intersection, things are forever working themselves out, so that this year’s change is next year’s continuity. We may wonder, then, both what the place does to people, and what people do to the place” (Hannerz, 1996, p. 28)

- 37 In globalisation theory, the interaction between the local and the global has proved a particularly complex and contested subject, with old ideas of one-way flows, in which the local was a mere passive recipient of whatever the global brought its way, being replaced by a much more multifaceted outlook whereby the local is seen as very much an agent of globalisation, and therefore not necessarily the victim as often previously depicted (Robertson, 1992; Hannerz, 1996). Representations of “the local” can also fall into the trap of imbuing the concept with ambiguous qualities such as tradition and permanence (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Anderson, 1991). The romanticising of the local infers a depth, or authenticity, that is by contrast absent in the “shallow” global – an inference that can easily provide misleading and over-simplified outlooks. The inconsistent and fleeting nature of interactions between the local and the global therefore should be bourn in mind when analysing areas of cultural life where the two meet, so that as Hannerz infers, we don’t starve a local culture of the ingredients that feed it.

- 38 It is clear that within football culture, the increased exposure to global flows (Castells, 1996) has not had a linear, one-dimensional effect on Manchester United supporters, in that while becoming more acutely aware of their club's global aims, reach and popularity, the peculiarities of the local football culture they inhabit have resulted in a defensive re-assertion of their local Mancunian identifications. At the same time, they were very conscious of the importance of the global dimensions of their club's dealings, as this is what largely allowed them to remain competitive with their rivals, both locally and globally. So while exhibiting a wider global consciousness, or "globality" (Robertson, 1992), their local identity was not only left intact, but in some senses invigorated.
- 39 The practicalities of Manchester United's globally-orientated operations however, together with wider transformations in the football industry, had increasingly made the very traditional, local forms of supporter culture cherished by many fans incongruous with the new and changing environment, or structure, they were operating within. So while it could be argued that there was nothing inherent within local football supporter culture that would reject, or perhaps more aptly be rejected by, exposure to global forces, the institutions and formal structures which are relied upon by the local cultures – such as the football club "company" and those organisations that govern the game – have not shown an ability or willingness to combine adaptation *and* preservation within this wider environment.
- 40 Attempts by governing bodies and football club owners, particularly in the English Premier League, to adapt to the changing environment in which they operate have tended therefore to favour an approach that moulds the operations of the football club to best profit from the markets of which they are now part. Of course, this shouldn't be viewed as simply an attempt to make the best of the situation in which they were to find themselves, as the perceived benefits of market forces had been explicitly behind many of the keenly-sought developments in English football over recent decades (Conn, 1996). The structure of English football therefore has been actively shaped by its guardians to take financial advantage of the global marketplace, rather than having any inherent "market value" above more stringently regulated competitors.
- 41 With an altogether more altruistic motive, many football supporters have actively sought to oppose the commodification and corporatisation of their football clubs and the game generally. The particular example of Manchester United supporters has shown that while the lure of local, national and global success has remained strong, more fundamental concerns with maintaining a distinctive, local supporter culture have required fans to increasingly oppose the direction in which their club is being taken. The fans' lack of power over such concerns has led some to dig deeper, to question the nature of their cultural identities, affiliations and relationships.
- 42 For these fans, strongly-held ideologies regarding community ownership of such an important local institution has led them to turn on its head the traditionally-held assumption that supporters should take a submissive role in their relationship with their football clubs. Supporter concerns, for so long ignored or patronised, have now become more politically-motivated, with a growing resentment towards those charged with overseeing the healthy development of the game. If the game's guardians are either unwilling or unable to provide the stewardship and moral direction the fans crave, then supporters will have to become more than mere consumers if they wish to alter the course currently being taken. Fan democracy is certainly a growing issue in English football, and the example of FC United represents something new, in that a significant

number of supporters from one of the most “global” of all football clubs felt so strongly that their club had become dislocated – “spiritually” at least – from its traditional, local roots that they did the previously unthinkable, and formed their own club.

- 43 These fans were able to “step out” from traditionally defined roles and alter their perspectives on just what constitutes “the football club” in order to maintain an immaterial allegiance to their club, and in fact to re-ground their support through the formation of a material “replacement” for the now inaccessible (either financially or ethically) Manchester United. This “altered state” of identification has implications not just from a “local identity” perspective, but also from a political engagement viewpoint, in that these fans – through their experience of market forces impacting negatively upon their cultural lives – have also been able to take a more critical view of politically-charged issues of power, ownership, consumption, responsibility and regulation.

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NOTES

1. IMUSA was set up in 1995 as an independent campaigning vehicle, tackling a range of supporter issues that were becoming of increasing concern to fans at this time.
2. SU grew out of attempts to mobilise supporter shareholdings at the time of the Murdoch takeover attempt in 1998, under the original name Shareholders United Against Murdoch (SUAM).
3. The idea of a "breakaway" club owned by supporters had first been mooted in the "Red Issue" fanzine around the time of the Murdoch takeover bid, and continued to receive little credibility amongst United's support even as the Glazer takeover battle reached its climax. It was only in the realisation that those who had committed to a boycott were to be left isolated and powerless in their relatively small numbers, that the positive and concrete steps to form FC United began to gain momentum.

ABSTRACTS

The 2005 acquisition of Manchester United by American businessman Malcolm Glazer – along with subsequent takeovers of other English football clubs – has raised many concerns amongst supporters, with questions increasingly being asked of the roles football clubs play within their "communities".

Contested notions of ownership and responsibility around such local "assets" are therefore under increased scrutiny, not just from those charged with regulating and governing the football industry, but from local and national government, the media and those who perhaps claim the biggest, and certainly the most emotional stakeholding of all – the supporters.

This paper outlines some of the most pressing cultural implications this issue has raised for Manchester United fans. Accordingly, the mobilisation of supporters opposed to the Glazer takeover is documented, along with the resulting cultural "fall out" for fans. Going beyond simplistic notions of a clash merely between "the local" and "the global", this case highlights some of the cultural and political implications that global capitalism's continuing encroachment into people's everyday lives can have.

L'acquisition en 2005 de Manchester United par l'homme d'affaires américain Malcolm Glazer – de même que le rachat par la suite d'autres clubs de football anglais – a suscité nombre de préoccupations parmi les supporters, notamment quant au rôle joué par les clubs au sein de leurs "communautés".

C'est ainsi que des notions contestées de propriété et de responsabilité autour de tels "atouts" locaux sont de plus en plus passées à la loupe, non seulement par les responsables chargés de réglementer et de diriger l'industrie du foot, mais aussi par les gouvernements au niveau local et national, les médias et ceux qui revendiquent l'implication la plus grande, et sans aucun doute la plus passionnelle, les supporters.

Cet article présente quelques-unes des conséquences culturelles les plus pressantes pour les fans de Manchester United suite à cette affaire. Il décrit la mobilisation des supporters opposés au rachat par Glazer, ainsi que les "retombées" culturelles pour les fans. Ce cas, qui va au-delà de notions simplistes telles qu'une banale confrontation entre le "local" et le "global", met en évidence les éventuelles implications culturelles et politiques suite à l'intrusion continue du capitalisme global dans la vie quotidienne des personnes.

INDEX

Keywords: football, globalisation, Manchester United supporters, cultural implications, ownership, resistance

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